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**DISPOSITIONS
FOR
TEACHING**

Midway College Teacher Education

**Teachers as Professional Leaders
Making a Difference**

Revised August 2009

Introduction

The theme, “Teachers: Professional Leaders Making a Difference” suggests the following essential questions:

- ✦ What educational experiences change aspiring candidates into teachers?
- ✦ How will the instructional processes influence the teacher to strive to be a “good teacher” versus a “good enough” teacher?
- ✦ What educational experiences will compel the new teacher toward leadership actions, contrived to make a difference in the lives of children?

I. The first step toward becoming a teacher is to acquire deep knowledge in the humanities, mathematics, and the sciences.

Midway’s Teacher Education Program is guided by a clear set of intentions for the journey of teacher development. Midway College claims membership in the community leading change in Kentucky education. Throughout Kentucky, teacher educators have an articulated common vision of excellence, as expressed in the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA). The Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB) has unified efforts through common goals and standards of expectation. Midway College educators embrace the vision for continuous educational improvement.

The bedrock of the curriculum is the liberal arts and the sciences. Models for understanding our vast inheritance of knowledge, new information and ourselves as human beings comes from a study of the humanities, mathematics and sciences. Candidates must have a strong foundation in core academic subjects. The questions of what to teach are answered by academic foundations in arts and sciences. Yet to be answered in methods classes are issues of pedagogy. The focus changes to **how** to teach. Methods classes immerse candidates in experiences designed to bring about understandings of different ways of knowing, varied theories, and practices for teaching core content and skills. The intent of Midway education classes is to develop inquisitive, seeking candidates, committed to becoming masters of both information and skills. These learners will be influenced to develop in themselves the *dispositions* of teachers.

II. The educated person must develop the desire for improvement.

Because teachers are the most important resources in classrooms, the critical task is “to compel with a vengeance”, the development of habits of mind, inclinations of spirit, and patterns for decisive actions directed toward personal formation (Fullan, 2003). Personal formation is the commitment and the will to change oneself in an **educative** manner (Greenfield, 1980).

The person must be seen as an ongoing integral process, a process which resists analysis into simpler constituents...while alive, the process is never complete; the potentialities are never exhausted. It is the person who grows, learns, makes choices, doubts, acts,

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and strives, who is guided by morality, who has an inner standpoint, who is creative-that person makes changes in himself and his world (Able, 1976).

III. The teacher has the courage to assume the mantle of leadership.

Midway education faculty define the core of leadership as “communicating a vision and empowering others” (Foster, 1986). This philosophy implies that teachers will share responsibility for the school community (Lambert, 1998).

Five assumptions form the conceptual framework for building leadership capacity:

1. Leadership is not trait theory; leadership and leader are not the same. Leadership can mean (and does mean in this context) the reciprocal learning processes that enable participants to construct and negotiate meanings leading to a shared purpose of schooling.

2. Leadership is about learning that leads to constructive change. Learning is among participants and therefore occurs collectively. Learning has direction toward a shared purpose.

*3. Everyone has the potential and right to work as a leader. Leading is skilled and complicated work that **every member of the school community can learn**. Democracy clearly defines the rights of individuals to actively participate in the decisions that affect their lives.*

4. Leading is a shared endeavor, the foundation for the democratization of schools. School change is a collective endeavor; therefore, people do this most effectively in the presence of others. The learning journey must be shared; otherwise, shared purpose and action are never achieved.

5. Leadership requires the redistribution of power and authority. Shared learning, purpose, action, and responsibility demand the realignment of power and authority (Lambert, 1998, p. 8-9).

Dispositions

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, NCATE (2006) defines dispositions as, “the values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors towards students, families, colleagues and communities and affect student learning, motivation and development as well as the educator’s own professional growth.”

Midway College faculty is focused on providing instruction in dispositions. This intent is described in the Continuous Assessment Plan 2008 as follows:

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The Midway teacher dispositions are inherent in the Conceptual Framework and theme, Teachers: Professional Leaders Making a Difference, and are embedded in the Midway curriculum. They reflect attitudes, values and beliefs that are foundational to the program at Midway and are clearly related to expectations in the P-12 education work place.

Midway College Dispositions: *The teacher demonstrates leadership dispositions through a deepening knowledge of self and the ability to think critically, solve problems and act decisively; and a commitment to cultural values, attitudes and diversity.*

- MCD 1 The teacher leader initiates and supports positive educational change.*
- MCD 2 The teacher leader demonstrates skills of a reflective educational leader who perceives both self and others as empowered.*
- MCD 3 The teacher leader commits to a deepening understanding of human diversity.*
- MCD 4 The teacher leader seeks and continually refines teaching practices that communicate high expectations and generate enriched learning for all students.*
- MCD 5 The teacher leader promotes student learning through active knowledge construction.*
- MCD 6 The teacher leader collaborates in critical thinking for the purpose of instructional improvement.*

In the Midway College dispositions model of instruction, qualities of leadership are inherent in all aspects of the curriculum. The success or failure of the educational program is tied to the **will** or **dispositions** exercised in learning and in the **will** to use what has been learned in educational improvement processes.

Leadership and efficacy are inseparable. The Midway strategy for instruction is consistent with Mike Rutherford's (2004) *Big Ideas...Essential Attributes of Excellent Teaching*. Rutherford sees the components of efficacy as compelling nature, deep content, and pedagogical skills.

Dispositions in Introductory Education Courses:

MCD 1 The teacher leader initiates and supports positive educational change.

Candidates will define leadership as it relates to the role of teacher and demonstrate in writing an understanding of the unique, multi-faceted nature of leadership.

- a. Though critical readings and discussions candidates will develop knowledge of definitions of leadership which have dominated educational research in the last two decades.
- b. Candidates will analyze definitions of leadership in relation to the perceptions, values, goals, and suggested actions inherent in each definition.
- c. Candidates will read critically Linda Lambert's *Leadership Capacity for Lasting School Improvement (2003)*.
- d. Candidates will respond in discussion and in writing to their role as a teacher leader.

Example Activities:

- ✦ Candidates are introduced to Midway College Dispositions in EDU 100.

MCD 2 The teacher leader demonstrates skills of a reflective educational leader who perceives both self and others as empowered.

Candidates will develop an understanding of and the skills for reflective thinking.

- a. Candidates will define *reflective thinking* using definitions from varied critical thinking models (Kellough, 2003).
- b. Candidates will respond in discussions and writings to give examples of the difference between *descriptive thinking* and *reflective thinking*.
- c. Candidates will gain knowledge of the process of reflection as these processes relate to instructional management (Kellough, 2003).

Example Activities:

- ✦ In EDU 103 and 210, candidates will critically read information on the history of American education. Discussion and writing activities will focus on philosophies and beliefs which have shaped educational practice in the past half century.
- ✦ Candidates will use their knowledge to write reflections in journals, and in class activities (EDU 100, 103, 210).
- ✦ Reflective writing and critical thinking is a component of EDU 100, EDU 103, and EDU 210.

MCD 3 The teacher leader commits to a deepening understanding of human diversity.

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Candidates demonstrate knowledge of cultural differences and similarities and show understandings of how elements of human uniqueness shape individuals and societies. The emphasis in all classes is to examine ways to value diversity and approaches for the teacher's response to diversity in the classroom.

- a. Candidates define diversity, drawing from varied historical background readings and sociological/psychological essays.
- b. Candidates describe, define, and analyze race, religion, gender, and disability characteristics in relation to the role of the teacher in addressing diversity in the classroom.

Example Activities:

- ✦ EDU 104, Diversity in the Classroom, is required for all Midway Teacher Education candidates. The course is taught in the first semester of the Teacher Education Program.
- ✦ Candidates discuss and write reflectively on their own diverse nature.
- ✦ Candidates identify a person in the environment with cultural characteristics different from themselves. Questions for an interview are developed using guidelines from the class discussions. Candidates interview the identified person and write a descriptive response.
- ✦ Candidates view and respond critically in discussions and writing to various race relation websites and videos such as: *Civil Rights in Kentucky* (www.ket.org/civilrights) and the video "Blue Eyes" (Verhagg & Bertran 1995).
- ✦ In EDU 314, Integrating Culture and Diversity into the Curriculum, candidates explore cultural diversity as issues of uniqueness which are manifested in literature, drama, dance, music, and visual arts.
- ✦ A particular focus in EDU 315, The Exceptional Child and Legal Aspects of Special Education, is on the teacher leadership disposition related to diversity. Course content and case study assignments build on the attitudes and perceptions of culture, families, and communities developed in EDU 206, to appreciate students with a wide range of learning needs.
- ✦ Candidates continue to think, discuss, and write about the role of the teacher in a diverse classroom in EDU 210 and EDU 360.

MCD 4 The teacher leader seeks and continually refines teaching practices that communicate high expectations and generate enriched learning for all students.

Candidates will develop knowledge and understanding of the **best practices** postulates set forth in the Effective Schools Research as interpreted in Jensen & Kiley's (2000) *Teaching, Leading, and Learning, Chapter Four (4) Effective Teaching: Knowledge, Performances, and Dispositions—Chalk and Talk were Never Enough*.

- a. Candidates will define **effective thinking** and **efficacy** (Kellough, 2003).
- b. Candidates will analyze examples of knowledge, classroom performances, and dispositions that describe effective teachers.
- c. Candidates will define emotional literacy and show how effective teaching and emotional literacy are intertwined.

[a-c in Jensen & Kiley, 2000, p. 84-128]

- d. Candidates gain knowledge of a broad range of philosophies and strategies for effective instructional management (Kellough, 2003, Ch. 1-6).
- e. Candidates will be given a knowledge base and guided in developing a plan for implementing *CHAMPS: A Proactive and Positive Approach to Classroom Management* (Sprick, Garrison, & Howard, 1998).

Example Activities:

- ✦ In EDU 210, Teaching and Learning I, candidates define, describe, and model the effective teaching behaviors inherent in cooperative learning, collaboration, and integrative approaches to planning.
- ✦ In EDU 210 and 360, Teaching and Learning II, issues of best practices in both instructional management and classroom behavior management and comprise the curriculum of these classes.

MCD 5 The teacher leader promotes student learning through active knowledge construction.

Candidates will understand the meaning of **constructivism** and how **constructivist** practices are inherent in effective teaching.

- a. Candidates will have an operative definition of **constructivism**.
- b. Candidates will create lesson plans which demonstrate an understanding of **constructivism**.

Example Activities:

- ✦ In EDU 100, candidates will read *The Midway College Conceptual Framework* (2009).
- ✦ Candidates will define **constructivism** in writings and discussions.

MCD 6 The teacher leader collaborates in critical thinking for the purpose of instructional improvement.

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Candidates will have the knowledge and skills necessary to lead in teaching critical thinking and cooperative learning to their students. As teacher leaders, they will have the knowledge, skills, and courage to initiate collaborative, and critical thinking/problem solving processes among teacher peers for the purpose of school improvement.

- a. All Midway College students are required to take CT 101, Critical Thinking. (Paul & Elder, 2008).
- b. EDU 210 and 360 have been identified as courses in which critical thinking is especially emphasized. Particular assignments requiring critical thinking skills have been designated for these courses.
- c. The majority of the Midway College Teacher Education courses address collaboration as defined by the Education Professional Standards Board Kentucky Teacher Standard VIII.

Example Activities:

- ✦ In EDU 210, candidates review definitions of critical thinking and are required to use operative definitions in discussions and writing.
- ✦ EDU 360 continues to build skills in critical thinking and cooperative learning through interactive group experiences.

When candidates finish EDU 360, they will have completed the introduction to the Midway College Dispositions. Each of the six principles of the dispositions will have been defined, discussed, and illustrated with examples and non examples.

Dispositions in Midway College upper level methods courses:

Kentucky teachers are expected to teach all students and support them to achieve at high academic standards. The students are diverse and have a multiplicity of unique learning needs.

Teachers entering the field of teaching must be prepared intellectually to employ varied methods, approaches, theories, and strategies. Midway College instructors emphasize the preparation of *leaders* who will make continual decisions to improve instruction.

All methods courses are grounded in **constructivism**. Midway College methods classes seek to move candidates to use pedagogical skills which go beyond teacher-centered, whole class delivery of information, with prescriptive seat work. **Constructivism** has many dimensions and often appears under the names of cognitive theory, meta-cognition, inquiry learning, social constructivism, and historical constructivism.

Midway College methods courses focus on developing a **commitment** to interactive methods of instruction which focus on the co-construction of knowledge: cooperative

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group explanations and projects. Candidates are placed in learning cultures where individual understandings, interpretations, questions, and original ideas are urged.

The tools for teaching pre-professionals the knowledge base, skills, and commitment to intellectual rigor are found in the lesson planning processes taught in each methods class. The explanation is that daily and unit instructional planning will reflect an understanding of the Midway College Dispositions and the application of each of the six principles.

These essential questions are applied to each core subject: language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

1. What initiatives in the teaching of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies will require my leadership skills?
2. What are the strengths I bring to the teaching of language arts, math, science, and social studies? How will I improve? How can I influence peers and students to join in efforts to increase student achievement?
3. What are the diverse needs of students in language arts, math, science, and social studies? How will I use the arts as a means to reach diverse needs?
4. What *best practices* of *effective teachers* need to be used in the teaching of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies?
5. What are the specific tenets of constructivism in each lesson? How can I support individual students in their own learning and avoid over-direction as the teacher?
6. Are all lessons designed to teach critical thinking? What specific critical thinking skill(s) are being taught in this lesson? Have I modeled the skill and allowed students to practice the skill under my supervision?

The Midway College goal of preparing **teachers as leaders who make a difference** is the focus of all lessons in teacher dispositions, defined as commitment and will. Lambert (1998) states the goal:

The work of leadership involves attention to shared learning that leads to shared purpose and action. In schools, increased leadership capacity means that the principal is one leader—an important leader. But he or she does not fill all or even most of the roles in the building. (p. 91-92).

High Leadership Capacity schools provide teachers with opportunities for skillful participation, which in turn allows their leadership skills to flourish (Lambert, 2003, p. 33).

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Michael Fullan (2003) sees the role of leadership as a **moral imperative**:

The single key for unlocking the resources and capacities....is an enlarged conception of the moral imperative of school leadership. Paradoxically, this amplified definition of school leader may make the job of school leader more attractive. It makes the job more meaningful and worthwhile....what we are talking about mobilizes great effort on the part of others...(p. 80).

In *Paradigms and Promises*, William Foster (1986) promotes an **educative** use of leadership:

Leadership is not manipulating a group in order to achieve a preset goal; Rather, it is empowering individuals in order to evaluate what goals are Important and what conditions are helpful. The educative use of leadership results in the empowerment of followers (p. 185-186).

The Midway College teacher leader will act through reflection, through understandings of human diversity, through professional practice in accord with high standards, and as a model for constructivist, critical thinking.

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